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**Zoe Lofgren: Representative of California’s 16th Congressional District**

This investigation about Zoe Lofgren is designed to fully understand how a Congressperson’s political beliefs and actions in Congress compare to the political beliefs those who she stands for. Ideology, partisanship, and representation are going to be broken down and examined to display her effectiveness in correctly representing her constituency, remaining loyal to her party, and following her personal interests. This will be done by examining three bills debated in United States House of Representatives, stating her views on all three issues, and finally identifying whether her decision/vote was based on her personal beliefs, her party’s interest, or that of her constituents. Some background information on Zoe Lofgren, the Democratic Party, and the 16th district of California will be provided to further enhance the understanding of political orientations.

Zoe Lofgren is the incumbent representative of the 16th district of California in the United States House of Representatives. She is a member of the Democratic Party and has been in office since 1995. She was born in San Mateo, California on December 21, 1947. She grew up and attended grade school in Palo Alto. After graduation, she got accepted to and attended the prestigious university know as Stanford University and the Santa Clara School of Law where she studied political science and immigration law. Ms. Lofgren is married to John Marshall Collins and has two children: Sheila and John Collins. Prior to becoming a Congresswoman, she was staff assistant to her predecessor Congressman Don Edwards who served from 1970-1978. She practiced immigration law as a partner in the firm of Webber and Lofgren from 1978-1980. She also taught immigration law at the University of Santa Clara School of Law and served on the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors (Lofgren)

Zoe Lofgren is quite an experienced politician. She was first elected to Congress in 1994 where she was the only freshman Democrat west of the Rocky Mountains. Unfortunately, she took office when the majority in Congress were the Republicans. She, from that point, has been an active player in the minority party and has supported her views by debating and voting on issues of the last decade. In the election of 2008, both the executive position and a majority in the legislative branch were won by the democratic party; so since then, she has played an active role in decision making in one of America’s most important institutions. She is currently a member of multiple committees’ and sub-committees like the committee on Homeland Security, House Administration, and the sub-committees on Border, Maritime and Global Counterterrorism. She also has the privilege of serving as the chair of many other committees and sub-committees like the committee on Standards and Official Conduct (Ethics) and the sub-committees on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, International Law and Elections. Because of her importance in the House, she has been elected to be chair of the 34-member California Democratic Congressional Delegation. In summary, Zoe has been in politics for 15 years now and is one of the most prominent democratic representatives from California (Lofgren).

The Honorable Lofgren, as mentioned before, belongs to the very active Democratic Party who currently holds the power in the federal government. Thomas Jefferson founded the Democratic Party in 1792. It started as a congressional caucus to fight for a Bill of Rights and against the Federalist Party. In 1800, Jefferson won the presidency and so became the first US President of the Democratic Party. John Adams, who ruled the nation according to the same principles, shortly followed him. Andrew Jackson, after long era of uncertainty in the party, arose to unify the movement set by Jefferson. Jackson became president in 1823 and also served in 1828. He created a national convention process and a party platform that set straight the ideas and goals of the party. Since that time, the party has been ruled on the basis of slight left liberal orientation (The Democratic Party).

Currently, Barrack Obama, President of the nation, rules the party. The Democratic Party stands for, “strong economic growth, retirement security, protecting the nation while securing civil rights and civil liberties, affordable Health Care for Americans, and open, honest, and accountable government” (The Democratic Party). This party has a large number of representatives from California in the United States House of Representatives; both California senators are also democrat. Being the fact that many democrats hold these offices, there is a California Democratic Congressional Delegation, which as previously stated, Zoe Lofgren chairs. Some of the projects carried out by the party are Health Care Reform, Immigration Reform, Economic Reform, etc. Zoe Lofgren is one of the most active movers of these reforms and therefore is a very loyal member of this leading party.

Zoe Lofgren’s district for 15 years has been the 16th district of California. This comprises of parts of the city of San Jose and most of the Silicon Valley, which are in the south section of the San Francisco Bay Area in the Santa Clara County. This region is famous for being the home and headquarters of multiple technological innovations and high-income companies. Some of these companies include: Apple Inc, Google, Adobe Systems, Intel, Hewlett-Packard, and Yahoo. All of this is due to the fact that Santa Clara County’s Population includes many ventured capitalists, entrepreneurs, and highly skilled workers in the field of technology and innovation. Out of all U.S. residents awarded patents, 8% come from the Silicon Valley, which adds up to more than 6,800 patents. The Silicon Valley is also extremely diverse. “An estimated 70-80% of people working in production jobs in the valley are immigrants, women, and people of color” (Pellow and Sun Hee 88). The Santa Clara County has the largest Latino and Asian population in the Bay Area, much of them living in San Jose. The foreign born population drastically grew from 19.5% in 1990 to 27.5% in 2000. Approximately half of the residents of the county speak another language at home rather than English (Lofgren, 16th Congressional District California). Her constituency is a vital area for the United States and the world in general because it is the “headquarters” of technology.

Despite the greatness of this land today, the Silicon Valley was not a place where every member of the day-to-day workforce enjoyed a highly paid job and could sustain a family easily without threats of falling below the poverty line. It still is in some cases. “Most of these workers emigrated to the United States seeking improvement in their economic situation and most lack the skills and social networks needed to move up and out of these jobs” (Pellow and Sun Hee 88). This is because in the era of mass-migration to the valley, many of the immigrants were not informed on how to manage all this new innovation in technology. For this reason, the majority of residents decided to depend on the democratic party and Zoe Lofgren that with more personal freedom but a highly controlled economy, try to make life economically better for all.

The comprehensive immigration reform issue is one of extreme most importance in our society and one that interests Congresswoman Lofgren. “While American democracy aims to give the people a voice in government, the meaning of “we the people” has changed over time. Who are Americans?” (Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, and Spitzer 8). Obama stated in one of his speeches, “Of course, the tensions around immigration are not new.  On one hand, we’ve always defined ourselves as a nation of immigrants -- a nation that welcomes those willing to embrace America’s precepts.  Indeed, it is this constant flow of immigrants that helped to make America what it is.  The scientific breakthroughs of Albert Einstein, the inventions of Nikola Tesla, the great ventures of Andrew Carnegie’s U.S. Steel and Sergey Brin’s Google, Inc. -– All this was possible because of immigrants.” With the massive illegal immigration of Hispanics to regions like Arizona, California, Texas, and other states near the southern border, and even with illegal immigration of people who receive visas and decide to stay, there is a conflict over who gets deported, who gets to reside, and why? It has come up to the current Obama administration to solve this dilemma with the aid of Congress to expedite a Comprehensive Immigration Reform Law that makes immigration and citizenship fair and understandable. There was also a new Arizona law passed that to some, cause racial profiling to Hispanics, especially Mexicans.

Some of the details of the bill are: (1) it gives immigrants a better, more comprehensive, and faster way to apply and get their citizenship, (2) punishes companies for violating human work laws thus promoting equality in the work place, (3) removes all punishment of illegal immigrants brought to the United States while young because they had no choice but to follow the orders of their parents, and (4) increases border patrol hence lowering incentive for illegal immigration (Remarks by the President on Comprehensive Immigration Reform, Barrack Obama, July 16, 2010). This law has not yet reached the floor of the House but other similar bills that include certain aspects that the current piece of legislation tries to carry out have been passed. Examples of these are HR 2202 passed in 1996 named Immigrant Public Assistance Amendment and HR 3736 named Nonimmigrant Specialty Workers Bill. Just as the large bill being discussed today in Congress, these bills try to make immigrants and visitors understand the confusing citizenship process and grant illegal immigrants the rights to certain needs like medical attention. On all these Zoe Lofgren has votes in favor of the already approved bills and so it is likely that she will approve of the major bill.

Being the fact that Zoe Lofgren is the chair of the subcommittee on Immigration, and that she is a democrat, she is one of the main pushers of this bill. It hasn’t passed the floor of the House, however, she is one of the main followers. Her views on this bill tie in to the main interests of her party and somewhat to the demographic statistics of her constituency. The nation and her constituency, as mentioned before, depend on immigrants and because making the process more understandable and citizenship more accessible, many immigrants will not have to be working under the radar and many of the immigrant entrepreneurs and businessmen/businesswomen of the region won’t go off to other countries forming competitions with American based companies. Furthermore, many more people will enter the Santa Clara County looking for jobs and settling there with their families -- more people more business. This bill is of extreme importance and so links Zoe Lofgren’s view on immigration to that of her constituency

The Affordable Care Act, commonly referred to as, Health Care Reform, was one of the major projects of the Obama Administration that became a law March 23, 2010. According to the official website of the newly passed Affordable Care Act Law, “The law puts into place comprehensive health insurance reforms that will hold insurance companies more accountable and will lower health care costs, guarantee more health care choices, and enhance the quality of health care for all Americans” The goal of the current administration is to ensure that every citizen has access to adequate and accountable medical care even if it takes slightly raising taxes.

Zoe Lofgren, as a loyal member of the Democratic Party, voted in favor of the law. Clearly, she is a believer of attention and medicine for all, a supporter of those who govern her party, and a mover and shaker of bills in the House of Representatives. This links this issue directly to her party’s interests. Additionally, the Health Care Reform law has multiple benefits for her constituency. “[The bill will] improve coverage for 432, 000 residents with health insurance, give tax-credits and other assistance to up to 106, 000 families and 14, 900 small businesses to help them afford coverage, improve Medicare for 71, 000 beneficiaries, including closing the donut hole, extend coverage to 43, 000 uninsured residents, guarantee that 11, 200 residents with pre-existing conditions can obtain coverage, protect 800 families from bankruptcy due to unaffordable health insurance plans, provide million of dollars in new funding for 22 community health centers, and reduce the cost of uncompensated care for hospitals and other health care providers by six million dollars annually.” Her view on health care connects to the interests of the party and to some extent to that of her constituency.

Another main issue that the Congresswoman has an overwhelming interest in is education. Zoe Lofgren was the only person in her family to attend a private university such as Stanford. She also has an extremely strong belief that schools should change their policies to accommodate the needs of their students and the constant changes that the younger generations pass through because of all the new factors like technology and globalization that affect their everyday lives. Because of this, she has sponsored multiple bills aimed at schools, for example: that public schools start no earlier than nine o’clock and offer many other ways to appeal to students’ ability to learn. “America’s greatest resource for innovation resides within classrooms across the country. We must give our students more opportunities to be highly trained in math, science, and technology so they can turn ideas into innovations. Future innovators must reflect the diversity of our country, and we must provide opportunities for every qualified student. I will work with my colleagues and the Obama Administration to create a new generation of scientists, engineers, and mathematicians and ensure that today’s students get the job skills they need at all levels of learning” (Lofgren, Education). Having dedicated herself to this, Zoe Lofgren approved of HR 1429 called the Head Start Act of 2007 and HR 1 called No Child Left Behind Act; both these bills are to aid the education process for all of America’s youth. The Santa Clara County, with all this upbringing of new research studies and technology, fed Zoe Lofgren with all the knowledge she needs to be able to re-structure the lives of students. Education links to Zoe’s personal interests because she wants others to be able to achieve everything that she achieved through education.

In conclusion, Zoe Lofgren is a very experienced, highly qualified member of the lower house of the United States Congress. She represents the 16th district of California, which constitutes San Jose and the Silicon Valley. This is the land of technology and the headquarters of the most famous and most profitable companies on the face of the earth. She is a member of the Democratic political party and has been an incumbent serving in office since 1995 (15 years). Her political view, being a proud member of the Democratic Party, is basically liberal. Three issues that she takes seriously are immigration, health care, and education. Immigration is an extremely important issue to her constituency since immigrants add up to be a large portion of the population. Lofgren is also an expert in immigration law because of her studies in the Santa Clara School of Law. She was also a mover of Health Care Reform, a law passed in March, because it was one of the main projects of the Obama Administration and the Democratic Party in general. She is a loyal member of the party and is also a proud one. The final issue discussed in this research paper is education being the fact that it ties into her personal interests. She believes that learning methods should evolve as students evolve. Zoe Lofgren (63 years old) is an example to all liberals, and an icon for Californians of the highly famous Silicon Valley.

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